

Cole Harris, *The Reluctant Land: Society, Space, and Environment in Canada before Confederation*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

In his closing remarks to the G20 in Pittsburgh this past September, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper claimed that Canada has no history of colonialism. Stephen Harper needs to read Cole Harris's *The Reluctant Land*.

Rather than having no colonial past, Harris's *tour de force* of Canada's pre-Confederation history demonstrates the complex role of settler colonialism in shaping the dynamics of latter-day Canada. Taking a regional approach to each chapter, the book shows how the contours of the country were shaped and defined by French, English (and American) imperial systems, commercial and industrial capitalism, and processes of agricultural settlement. The differing influence of these components shaped how European and Aboriginal peoples interacted and how settler societies emerged. When these processes converged, Europeans completely dispossessed Aboriginal peoples; when one or more were less influential, a more balanced (yet often unequal) relationship emerged.

Comparison helps to clarify Harris's complex depiction of colonial development in French and British North America. Not only does he compare regions and colonies to each other, but he also draws on more global examples to make his points. Canadian immigrants are contrasted both to their kin in Europe, and also to the situation elsewhere in Canada. The result is a nuanced conclusion that makes two critical points about early European settlers. First, although colonial society was hardly a paragon of equality, the social gradient was generally flatter and life in Canada better than from where they had come. Second, Canada has a long history of multicultural immigration.

Harris's frequent comparisons reflect his broad and thorough use of secondary source material to underpin his argument. Bibliographies at the end of each chapter put most doctoral comprehensive reading lists to shame. These sources do not just provide the content for his depiction of early settler societies, but also for succinct discussion about how the sources conflict. Historiographical discussions range from nineteenth-century debates over the future of British North America to an argument that uses seigneurial case studies to debunk the idea of widespread agricultural crisis in early-nineteenth-century Lower Canada. Unfortunately each chapter's length reflects the amount of historiography on the subject. A consequence of this is that chapters range from 19 to 75 pages and will require creative manipulation to be used effectively in the classroom.

A far more serious problem in the book is the relative absence of Aboriginal people in the discussions of New France and Lower Canada. Nearly every chapter, except for those focusing on the St. Lawrence River, discuss how Europeans took possession of Aboriginal lands. The experiences along the St.

Lawrence varied significantly from elsewhere in British North America. Rather than engaging in treaties, or having their land outright stolen, these communities held legal title under the guardianship of the Jesuits during the French regime. It was only after the Conquest, and through processes seen elsewhere in British North America, that their right to the land was challenged. Although the sections on New France and Lower Canada do an excellent job at illustrating the centrality of French influence to Canada's composition — one of Harris's key conclusions — the absence of Aboriginal people from his history of this region risks leaving the reader with the impression that Aboriginal people were not dispossessed of their land here.

At the end of *The Reluctant Land* the reader is left with two conclusions about how the preceding 250 years affected Confederation. In highlighting a number of the potential political changes proposed during the two decades leading up to 1867, the book emphasizes the pragmatism and compromise that came to define Confederation. In Harris's view, Confederation cannot be boiled down to the influence of a single founding personality or colonial narrative. Differing mixtures of imperialism, commercial and industrial capitalism, and agricultural settlement influenced the variety of goals and expectations that each colonial stakeholder brought to Confederation. But there were some things all of the stakeholders held in common: within these negotiations the aggressive nature of settler colonialism on Aboriginal peoples was ignored. This remains Confederation's unfinished business.

It is sometimes tempting to dismiss Canada's early history in favour of some of the more immediate and dramatic events of the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *The Reluctant Land* demonstrates that some of the most fundamental issues facing contemporary Canadian society find their origins in an earlier period. Ignoring (or skimming) Canada's colonial past diminishes this legacy and reinforces a limited knowledge of the Canadian relationship to multiculturalism, *la francophonie canadienne*, human-caused environmental change, and Aboriginal people. Despite the problems outlined above, the book deserves to be considered mandatory reading for all students seeking to understand Canada's past. There are few books that match *The Reluctant Land* in breadth and analysis.

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Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

This account of the surveillance of Canadian lesbians and gays in the name of national security is impressive, at once bone-chilling and inspiring. It builds on Kinsman's earlier work on sexual regulation to set out the systematic, and